



February 27, 2023  
Cynthia Johnson, PCA  
New Haven  
District 1199NE  
Before the Finance Committee

***In Support of HB 5673 AN ACT CONCERNING THE REFORMATION OF CERTAIN TAXES AND TAX EQUITY***

Good Afternoon Senator Fonfara, Representative Horn and members of the Committee, my name is Cynthia Johnson. I live in New Haven and have worked for the last five years caring for my daughter as her Personal Care Attendant (PCA). I am here to testify in support of House Bill 5673.

I love my daughter and have cared for her for her entire life; however, a series of events that began in 2015 led me to become her PCA. My daughter Anissa, lives with a rare case of epilepsy syndrome which causes her to experience a variety of seizures, one of which are known as drop seizures. In 2015, Anissa was walking to the store when she experienced a drop seizure and fell to the ground. When she hit the ground the doctors say she hit her face on the ground so hard that she broke her jaw in three places. She also had most of her teeth dislodged. Not broken, but removed from her gums by the force of the impact.

Recovering from this fall took almost two years. It was during my daughter's recovery that I decided I had to stay home to care for her full time, and if it were not for the Medicaid waiver program I would not have been able to get paid for doing so. In 2019, because of circumstances beyond our control, we were uprooted from our home of 9 years and had to live out of a motel for months! When adequate housing was secured, my daughter's health took another turn! Her seizures changed to Bilateral seizures. At the beginning of these seizures, my daughter realizes the seizure is coming upon her because she calls out to me, literally reaches for me! I have time to lay her down before she begins to seize, but the horrific part is she screams throughout this entire seizure as if she is feeling it, totally! The first time she had one I froze and cried because I couldn't help my child, I couldn't stop the pain I thought she was going through! Glory to God, nobody wants to see their child suffer this way!

The PCA that was present that particular day truly was a professional caregiver! She stepped in and helped my daughter as well as comforted me! I could not have made it through that day without the help of the services of that PCA. PCAs, nursing home

workers, group home workers, go to work every day to ensure our consumers have the care they depend on, yet we are paid poverty wages and provided barely any benefits. PCAs like me live paycheck to paycheck. On top of our inadequate wages, we are not offered the necessary benefits others are offered through their job. We are not given any paid sick leave nor any health insurance to fall back on when we become sick. This was before the pandemic, so since the pandemic things have only gotten worse for us! For those working through the agencies, getting sick means getting replaced, and not having a job to come back to!

Connecticut must do more to meet the needs of Home Care workers. We are an important part of the long term care infrastructure in CT, and must be treated as such. The work we do allows people to live and receive care in their own homes with dignity. Although we are grateful for what Connecticut does, don't turn back now! I love this state because of the care it has shown me and my daughter! Please, please don't turn your backs on us or many in need just like us! Pass House Bill 5673 so that Connecticut can continue to fund and expand the Medicaid Waiver Program so that workers like me can receive benefits like health care, livable wages, and retirement! Thank you for your time.